

Message Text

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ACTION EB-08

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CAB-02 CIAE-00 COME-00
DODE-00 DOTE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 FAA-00 L-03 AF-10
SP-02 SS-15 NSC-05 PA-01 /069 W
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P R 221745Z FEB 78
FM AMEMBASSY LISBON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4818
INFO AMCONSUL PONTA DELGADA
COMUSFORAZ

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: EAIR, PO
SUBJECT: CIVAIR: TWA ACCESS TO LAJES

REF: A) STATE 42528 B) LISBON 1046 C) LISBON 932 D) LISBON 878

1. IN CONVERSATION WITH EMBASSY OFFICERS FEBRUARY 17, TAP PRESIDENT MONTEIRO DA SILVA STATED TAP IS NOT REPEAT NOT OPPOSED TO TWA OPERATING AT LAJES. SILVA MADE IT CLEAR, HOWEVER, THAT TAP SUPPORTS GOP LEGAL POSITION THAT SUCH ACCESS IS A PRIVILEGE RATHER THAN A RIGHT; TAP THEREFORE EXPECTS A REASONABLE QUID.

2. ECON COUNSELOR DISPUTED GOP LEGAL INTERPRETATION OF U.S.- PORTUGUESE BILATERAL AND NOTED THAT RECENT EFFORTS HAD SOUGHT TO FIND AN INFORMAL SOLUTION TO THE IMPASSE. SILVA REPLIED THAT HE HAD BEEN DISAPPOINTED WITH TWA'S NARROW OFFER OF JANUARY 30 (REF D). TWA, HE ADDED, CAN SURELY COME UP WITH ALTERNATIVE QUID IF BLOCKED SEAT ARRANGEMENT IS NOT VIABLE. SILVA STATED THAT BLOCKED SEAT ARRANGEMENT IS NOT REALLY OF SIGNIFICANT INTEREST TO TAP, BUT IS ONE OF SEVERAL ALTERNATIVE QUIDS. ALTHOUGH HE DID NOT SPECIFY WHAT AL-

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TERNATIVES HE HAD IN MIND, SILVA IMPLIED THESE ARE RELATED TO TAP'S U.S. OPERATIONS. IN THE INTEREST OF REOPENING DIALOGUE, SILVA SAID TAP WILL, IN NEXT FEW DAYS, INVITE TWA NEW YORK OFFICIALS TO RESUME DISCUSSIONS IN LISBON.

3. FOLLOWING RECEIPT OF REF A, ECON COUNSELOR DISCUSSED SUBJECT WITH DR. PAULO ENNES, DIRECTOR OF BILATERAL

AFFAIRS IN MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS. ENNES STATED THAT HE HAD RECEIVED ONLY SKETCHY REPORT ON TWA MEETING WITH TAP. HE EXPRESSED CONSIDERABLE DISAPPOINTMENT THAT AIRLINES HAD FAILED TO PROGRESS IN THEIR DISCUSSIONS. ECON COUNSELOR, SUGGESTING THAT ISSUE COULD BECOME SIGNIFICANT PROBLEM IF A SOLUTION IS NOT PROMPTLY FOUND, SUGGESTED THAT TWA BE GRANTED IMMEDIATE AUTHORIZATION TO INITIATE OPERATIONS AT LAJES. ENNES, WHILE DEMONSTRATING CONCERN, FAILED TO REACT TO THIS SUGGESTION. HE EVIDENTLY WAS UNCOMFORTABLE WITH THE ISSUE. EMBASSY PLANS TO CONTACT HIM AGAIN BEFORE THE END OF THIS WEEK.

4. LOCAL TWA REP PLANS TO VISIT AZORES BEGINNING THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 23. DURING COURSE OF HIS VISIT, HE INTENDS TO GIVE A PRESS CONFERENCE TO REFUTE REPEATED AZOREAN PRESS ACCOUNTS CLAIMING THAT TWA HAS NO DESIRE TO OPERATE AT LAJES. ECON COUNSELOR ENCOURAGED HIM TO STICK TO THE FACTS, AVOID EXCESSIVE INTERPRETATIVE COMMENTS, AND, ABOVE ALL, NOT TO BE CAUGHT IN THE CURRENT ARGUMENT BETWEEN THE CENTRAL AND REGIONAL GOVERNMENTS ON THIS ISSUE.

5. COMMENT: TAP CLEARLY LACKS INCENTIVE TO REACH AGREEMENT WITH TWA. ABSENT TAP WILLINGNESS, GOP IS UNLIKELY TO ACT DECISIVELY. EMBASSY HOPES TWA WILL RESPOND POSITIVELY TO TAP'S FORTHCOMING INVITATION TO SEARCH FOR SUITABLE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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QUID. IF OUR READING OF MONTEIRO DA SILVA IS CORRECT, TAP WILL ENTER TALKS GENUINELY INTERESTED IN REACHING AN AGREEMENT, BUT ONLY IF IT RECEIVES SOMETHING IN RETURN. WE ARE NOT PARTICULARLY SANGUINE THAT AIRLINES WILL ACHIEVE AGREEMENT, ESPECIALLY SINCE TWA BECOMING IMPATIENT WITH WHAT IT REGARDS AS TAP DELAYING TACTICS. IF USG TRULY WISHES TO PRESS TWA ACCESS TO LAJES, IT MAY HAVE TO TAKE SOME ACTION TO DEMONSTRATE ITS DETERMINATION AND TO INDICATE TO GOP THAT FAILURE TO REACH ACCORD WILL HAVE AN ECONOMIC COST.

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Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
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